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ABSTRACT

To determine how English department chairmen perceive the role of the freshman English director, a study surveyed English department chairmen from 250 randomly selected medium/small to large universities nationwide, representing every state (with a 54% response rate). The questionnaire solicited data about the tasks and responsibilities of directing a freshman English program. Respondents rated 21 items on a four-point scale from "essential" to "not important," in addition to answering open-ended questions concerning qualities necessary for a program director. Results indicated that, collectively, chairs felt strongest about six key aspects of directing a freshman English program. The director should (1) remain accessible throughout the semester; (2) communicate regularly with the chair; (3) possess strong communication skills; (4) remain current with developments in the discipline; (5) train inexperienced staff; and (6) monitor the quality of the staff's teaching. Results revealed that chairs valued general administrative abilities over substantive policy-making or direct administrative control of the program, and many of the prose remarks indicated that the chairs perceived a major responsibility of the writing program administrator to be one of good public relations. Additional qualities noted, which were not listed on the questionnaire, included interpersonal skills and various personality traits, such as patience, common sense, and a sense of humor. (A sample questionnaire is included.) (MM)

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Directing Freshman English: Who Really Has Control?

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Directing Freshman English: Who Really Has Control?

> *My conclusions are:*
> 1. *No job on campus is as thankless or as demanding as directing the writing program.*
> 2. *No other job offers a better opportunity to have a significant impact on students' education.*
> 3. *There is a potential rapport among writing teachers that can be mutually supporting and very satisfying.*
> 4. *What we do really matters.* (Leon Coburn)

When Ken Bruffee wrote in 1985 that writing program administrators were beginning to experience a "deepening in professional self-understanding," the field was entering a period of intense self-reflexivity. Bruffee saw this "new ability to criticize ourselves and put that criticism to good use" as evidence of "a high degree of professional maturity" (7, 9). This professional self-scrutiny has not been limited to the pages of WPA. Several major journals have published articles about writing program administration, and, much to the surprise of many of us in composition, the traditionally elitist Modern Language Association has recently published two books on the subject. This close examination of writing programs is especially important because, presumably, a writing program reflects the extent to which current theory and research have influenced composition pedagogy. Such analysis also allows us to judge the influence of composition administrators within their departments.

Several excellent studies of programs and their directors have been published in the last few years. For example, Linda G. Polin and Edward M. White interviewed 57 people on ten campuses of the California State System

CS211404

(CSU) to discover how well "newer composition theory had become 'institutionalized'" (21). They were surprised to discover that teachers and writing program administrators were largely unable to articulate program goals: ". . . when asked about program goals and philosophy, they chose to speak about carrying out a curriculum rather than about aiming at particular outcomes from that curriculum" (21). They also found that freshman English directors exercised administrative control over writing programs in only six of the ten CSU campuses, and only one of the six was a large, urban campus. Apparently, in large departments staffed primarily by faculty whose interests and expertise have traditionally been literature and criticism, writing program administrators have less control over how writing is taught, how much writing is assigned, and what textbooks are required. Polin and White conclude that "the coordinator's ability to establish and maintain a cohesive program may be largely dependent upon the status of the faculty teaching courses in the program" (24).

Similarly, the two books published by the Modern Language Association provide insight into the role of the writing program administrator. Carol P. Hartzog's Composition and the Academy: A Study of Writing Program Administration is an extensive study of the writing programs of 41 universities belonging to the Association of American Universities. Hartzog discovered that the responsibilities of freshman English directors, the administrative structures of programs, and the degree of control that directors have over their programs vary widely from institution to institution. Likewise, Paul Connolly and Teresa Vilardi's New Methods in College Writing Programs: Theories in Practice illustrates the diversity of writing programs and the varying levels of authority directors possess.

While these and other studies are valuable contributions, there is a

need, as Bruffee reminds us, for writing program administrators to continue to examine their administrative roles and determine the level of authority they have within their departments. Many questions remain unanswered. Does the position command respect from colleagues? How much effective power should directors possess? Should they create policy? Promote curricular reform? Or serve primarily as coordinators? What tasks or sub-roles are most important? What are the prevailing misconceptions about writing program administrators? In order to help answer these questions, we sought to obtain a unique perspective. Rather than interviewing composition faculty and freshman English directors, we surveyed those who are most often charged with hiring and supervising writing program administrators: their chairs. Because department chairs are administratively responsible for writing program administrators, they are in an excellent position to help us understand the exact role of the writing director, at least as it is perceived from outside the writing program.

To determine how chairs as a group perceive the role of the freshman English director, we distributed a questionnaire to the chairs of English departments across the nation. Targeting a range of institutions from medium/small to large, we selected 250 of these institutions at random, making sure, however, that every state was represented. One hundred and thirty-six chairs from almost every state completed the questionnaire. This high response rate (54%) is encouraging, since it indicates that the study's data are particularly reliable.

The questionnaire (printed below) solicits data about the tasks and responsibilities of directing a freshman English program. It asks respondents to rate 21 items on a four-point scale from "essential" to "not important." This continuum enabled the chairs to rate the importance of

each item, giving us a sense of the chairs' priorities. Most importantly, however, the chairs' priorities allowed us to determine the relative level of authority that directors enjoy within the power structure of their departments. The remaining questions solicit brief answers.

Questionnaire

DIRECTIONS: The first 21 statements relate to activities of the Freshman English Director. Please rate each one on the 1-4 scale by checking the appropriate box. The remaining questions ask for brief answers.

	essential	important	somewhat helpful	not important
1) Remains accessible throughout the semester				
2) Hires and supervises adjuncts				
3) Schedules regular staff meetings				
4) Maintains his or her own scholarship				
5) Trains inexperienced staff				
6) Possesses strong communication skills				
7) Schedules and staffs writing courses				
8) Manages grade disputes				
9) Expresses policy in written documents				
10) Establishes liaisons with the community				
11) Familiarizes faculty with new developments in composition				
12) Receives outstanding evaluations for his or her own teaching				
13) Develops new programs (e.g., writing across curriculum)				
14) Directs other components of writing program (e.g., business and technical writing)				
15) Monitors the quality of staff's teaching				
16) Handles political problems				
17) Establishes department-wide syllabus				
18) Remains current with developments in the discipline				
19) Communicates regularly with the chair				
20) Regularly reviews textbooks for adoption				
21) Remains available throughout the workday				

22) Who should be the primary policymaker for the writing program? ____ Freshman English Director; ____ department chair; ____ a committee.

23) What important qualities are not listed in this questionnaire?_____

24) What aspects of the Freshman English Director's job are most important? _____

SIX KEY CONCERNS

Collectively, the chairs feel strongest about six key aspects of directing a freshman English program. Most chairs believe that it is most essential that the director "remain accessible throughout the semester." A total of 116 respondents (85%) view accessibility as "essential," and the remainder see it as "important." Similarly, 71% of the chairs state that it is "essential" or "important" that the director "remain available throughout the day." Clearly, the availability of the director is of primary importance to department chairs. One respondent comments that the director "must be readily accessible to TAs in order to be effective." It is not surprising that accessibility is such a central issue; common sense would seem to indicate that administration by its very nature necessitates availability. An effective administrator, especially the director of a large writing program, staffed, as is often the case, by novice instructors, must maintain constant and close contact with numerous constituencies: faculty, adjuncts, teaching assistants, students, the chair, and even parents. Such coordination and arbitration cannot be accomplished effectively by proxy or even, at times, by appointment. Often, an important situation demands immediate attention, necessitating that the director be "on the scene." The respondents to this survey agree.

Second in importance in the opinion of most chairs is that the director "communicate regularly with the chair." An overwhelming 112 chairs (82%) rate this activity "essential," and the remainder consider it "important." One respondent considers this "upward communication" so important that she placed four check marks in the "essential" box. Another chair writes, "The most important aspect of the director's job is communicating with the chair. However, he or she must exhaust all other resources for

solving problems on the freshman composition program before they get to the department chair's office or on the full department meeting agenda; that is, the director must keep such problems to a minimum." These respondents view communication with the chair as important, but they expect the director to deflect trivial or routine problems from the attention of higher administration.

While most chairs agree that the director should maintain constant communication with the department chair, several comment that such communication should extend to others in the department. The director must "work effectively with the chair as well as represent the program within the department" because "good communication with the chair, faculty and students is essential." In fact, an effective director "keeps lines of communication open and provides input into those lines to keep people informed of policy, not only inside but outside the department as well."

It is no coincidence that the two items receiving the highest ratings are the director's availability and willingness to communicate regularly with the chair and others; most specialists in organizational management stress that both are vital to the efficient operation of any large hierarchial organization. Understandably, then, the item the chairs rate third in importance is that the director must "possess strong communication skills." A sizable majority of respondents (76%) rate this ability "essential," while the remainder see it as "important." While such skills are indispensable to any administrator, they are particularly important to the freshman English director, since he or she must coordinate the interests of multiple constituencies. As one chair says, "The freshman English director must have the ability to communicate effectively with all constituents: freshmen, faculty, adjuncts, TAs, chair, dean, and community." Says

another, the director must "communicate well with the composition committee and other key writing program faculty in order to gain their respect and cooperation."

These chairs understand communication skills to encompass more than mechanical fluency of self-expression. In their prose remarks, many respondents link communication skills with interpersonal skills, including "the ability to cooperate and facilitate," "tact and counseling skills," an "open and equitable manner that helps establish trust," "infinite patience and the ability to say 'no,'" and even "a sense of humor." Says one chair, "In order to be effective, the FED must possess warmth and interpersonal skills as well as the ability to communicate well." Not surprisingly, a foremost concern of many of these respondents is that the director cultivate the "ability to get along with all people affected by the writing program." Writes one chair, "Related to the ability to communicate are people skills and a degree of flexibility and open-mindedness--all essential to a good administrator." Says another, "Good colleagueship is of utmost importance." The director must "communicate an openness to faculty concerns and cannot be defensive," and, above all, "must have a personality that can handle all the pressures of literature professors." In short, the chairs believe that an effective freshman English director must possess sophisticated communication and interpersonal skills that enable him or her to balance the objectives of the writing program and the frequently conflicting self-interests of those affected by it--certainly, a demanding task.

Fourth in importance to the chairs is that the director "remain current with developments in the discipline." Eighty-six respondents (63%) view this as "essential" and another 44 (32%) see it as "important." Many

chairs stress the importance of this activity in their prose remarks: "It is absolutely essential that the freshman English director remain current with theoretical and technological developments" because "the director must develop courses and programs that reflect current scholarship in the field." In fact, the director should even "sponsor composition research within the department." However, one chair cautions that the "writing administrator must prefer solving problems to cranking out theory," and another even contends that "administrative ability and leadership are more important than knowledge of scholarship in composition." Nevertheless, the clear consensus of the chairs is that "an effective director must keep up-to-date in the field." Given the fact that rhetoric and composition has emerged as a legitimate discipline, it is entirely understandable that the chairs wish their writing program administrators to stay abreast of current scholarship, especially since much of that scholarship is directed toward developing and refining effective pedagogy. This consensus is encouraging because it indicates that English department chairs generally are interested in drawing on the expertise of composition specialists to establish writing programs soundly grounded in contemporary theory and research.

Fifth in importance is that the director "train inexperienced staff." An overwhelming 92% of the respondents find this activity to be "essential" or "important." Several chairs comment that the director "must exercise leadership in training and supervising TAs, thereby monitoring the quality of the program." The director must "provide direction and guidance to teaching assistants" and must "train staff in ways that reach them," especially by "serving as a model of excellence in the teaching of composition." Writes one chair, "The most important aspects of the freshman English director's job are training TAs, being accessible to them, and

conducting the necessary workshops concerned with teaching composition." Thus, an effective writing program administrator remains conversant with current composition scholarship and translates this knowledge into the program through a rigorous training program.[1]

In fact, the chairs also agree that the director's responsibilities extend beyond training TAs to "familiarizing faculty with new developments in composition." A majority (79%) find this activity "essential" or "important." Given this high rating and the emphasis ascribed to training teaching assistants, however, we were surprised that none of the chairs specifically mention faculty development in their written comments. This omission is especially surprising in light of the traditional assumption, evident in the published research, that a main task of the freshman English director is to retrain literature faculty to teach compostion.[2]

Closely related to staff training is "monitoring the quality of the staff's teaching"--the sixth most important activity, according to the chairs. Sixty-six respondents (49%) rank this activity as "essential," and another 46 (34%) consider it "important." Many chairs comment that it is imperative that the director visit the classes of the staff with some regularity. They write, "The writing director must not only train staff but monitor their teaching" because "evaluation of instruction is paramount." Writes another, "I think it is extremely important that the FED supervise the actual teaching, especially by TAs and part-timers, and that he or she exhibit flexibility about teaching styles." This theme of flexibility recurs often in the written responses: "The writing administrator must be able to maintain the quality and consistency of teaching in the program but must possess the ability to appreciate diverse teaching styles." Explains one chair, "The most important quality not listed on

this questionnaire is flexibility. Not all instructors teach the same way, so a director needs to develop a comprehensive program that is student-centered and writing-intensive, but he must understand that guidelines (e.g., a loosely structured, program-wide syllabus) can be adhered to in different ways by different instructors." In other words, the chairs wish the director to engage in evaluation but not to be authoritarian, imposing a particular teaching style or approach on the staff.

The priorities of the chairs responding to this survey seem to indicate that many chairs perceive the writing program administrator as a kind of supervisor, not a director in the full sense of the word. For example, of all 21 items on the questionnaire, the six that the respondents choose as "essential" do not entail substantive administrative authority. In fact, it can be argued that the chairs value these six most highly precisely because they are non-substantive and, perhaps, because they help the chair maintain control.

Consider, for instance, these six activities as they relate to real administrative control. The chairs value as their highest priority the director's accessibility. While undoubtedly accessibility is important to effective administration, it is considerably less important on the scale of administrative responsibilities than, say, creating policy, devising department-wide syllabi, or handling political problems. In fact, the director's accessibility is likely to be especially beneficial to the chair, since the director who is available is also able to deflect mundane problems from the chair's attention. Apparently, many chairs believe the director should be seen but not heard.

Similarly, communicating regularly with the chair directly benefits the chair, since such communication allows him or her to maintain maximum

control of all issues as they arise and before they are resolved in a manner unacceptable to the chair. Also, possessing strong communication skills and remaining current with scholarship are likely to help a director perform his or her job more effectively, but they do not relate to the director's direct control of the program. And, of course, while training staff and monitoring their teaching do entail administrative authority, both tasks nonetheless are less important than many of the responsibilities discussed in this study.

MANAGERIAL ACTIVITIES AND THE LIMITS OF POWER

The questionnaire items that address what we might loosely call "managerial" activities also reveal the relative level of authority that directors exercise within the power structure of the department. There is little disagreement over some activities. The chairs are unequivocal in their belief that the director should "schedule regular staff meetings." A clear majority (79%) find this activity "essential" or "important." A majority of similar magnitude believe that the director should "regularly review textbooks for adoption" and "express policy in written documents." While there is relative consensus over these fairly innocuous responsibilities, there is considerable disagreement over more substantive activities. For example, only about half of the respondents feel that the writing program administrator should "schedule and staff writing courses," while the remainder feel that this activity is only "somewhat helpful" or "not important" at all. We had assumed that scheduling and staffing are primary duties of the director, but apparently these responsibilities take a back seat to training staff and monitoring their teaching. In fact, several chairs claim that they themselves control staffing and scheduling, con-

tending that the director should serve only as a "liaison with the department head in the selection of staff."

Similarly, only 37 chairs (27%) say it is "essential" that the director "develop new programs," and only 16 chairs (12%) say it is "essential" that the chair "establish liaisons with the community." In fact, the majority of the chairs (55%) view networking with the community as "not important" or only "somewhat helpful." While scholars and administrators such as Hartzog and Polin and White are recommending that English departments reexamine practices and programs, chairs do not seem concerned with such curricular reforms, or at least remain divided on their importance. The chairs also disagree about whether the writing program administrator should direct other components of the writing program, such as business and technical writing: only 46% consider it "essential" or "very important."

In addition, the chairs are split fairly equally over whether the director should "handle political problems." Only about half the respondents (57%) view this activity as "essential" or "important." Some respondents say that the director must be "politically smart" and possess "diplomacy and tact," while others argue that "political problems must be left to the chair to solve." Given the politically charged nature of most English departments, we find it unusual that the chairs do not rate this ability higher. However, a close examination of the data reveals a pattern that helps explain the disagreements over several of these managerial activities. The chairs are most in agreement about activities that confer little power on the writing program director. Thus, there is little disagreement over the importance of scheduling meetings and examining textbooks. In contrast, those activities that do necessitate political power on the part of the director produce disagreement. Thus, the chairs are split over the

importance of handling political problems, developing programs, and scheduling and staffing courses. Clearly, the political power structure of some departments is such that real power does not filter down easily from the top. The chair retains the power to produce effective change in the form of direct control, while relegating superficial authority (primarily the power to "oversee" or supervise) to the director. It appears, then, that in reality more writing program administrators are coordinators than directors.[3]

This distribution of power is especially evident in the responses to question 22: "Who should be the primary policymaker for the writing program?" We find it disturbing that only 33 chairs (24%) believe that the writing program administrator should be responsible for devising program policy. Most respondents (54%) feel that this power should be exercised by a departmental committee or by the chair (13%). Eleven respondents believe that policy should be made by all three. This subject is so important to the chairs that they address it in their prose remarks more frequently than any other subject, producing a kind of debate. On the one hand, several argue that the director should have the power to "develop overall program content and direction" and "have complete control over the program and the knowledge to carry it out." That is, the director must have "the ability and opportunity to formulate policy" and "establish the objectives of the program." In fact, one chair writes, "In this department the Director of Writing and the Chairman are for all practical purposes Co-Chairmen. We both manage the day-to-day activities of the writing program and of the department as a whole." On the other hand, even more respondents wish to minimize the director's power. Many write that the director should only <u>recommend</u> policy: "Our director deals directly only with TAs. She chairs

the Writing Committee which recommends policy to the whole department." The director "must work with faculty to establish objectives" and should "only recommend policy to appropriate committees and ultimately to the chair." Writes one chair, "I establish policy and course directions. I provide the guidelines." Says another, "Ultimately, the chair is held accountable for policies and programs; if one has a weak Freshman English Director, the chair must either make pertinent policies or find a new director that he can control." Control is a key concept here. In effect, the debate in the survey responses centers on who has effective control of the writing program, and approximately one-half of the chairs feel that the writing program director should not possess such control. Presumably, the director can "recommend" policy and even "express policy in written documents," but he or she, at least in the eyes of many chairs, must not create that policy.[4]

The powerlessness of some writing program administrators is particularly apparent in the prose remarks of two chairs: "Our director is not a faculty member. He is an underpaid lecturer without tenure!" And, "At one time, the Freshman English Director was always a regular member of the faculty, usually an assistant professor. In recent years, we have appointed a Ph.D. who is not a member of the standing faculty. This has worked well, since it does not destroy the career of an assistant professor. The only slight negative is that the Freshman Director may not have quite the authority in the department that a member of the regular faculty would have." Notice that this second writer assumes that directing a writing program will have a deleterious effect on an instructor's career, whereas many faculty members today consider such a position the key to professional success. It appears to us that this writer's attitude reveals

a disturbing ethical position. Apparently, the writer feels no compunction about "destroying" the career of a young, non-tenure track instructor while attempting to save "a regular member of the faculty." Evidently, the non-tenure track professor's lack of status within the department provides sufficient salve to the conscience. If, for the sake of argument, we were to accept this writer's assumption that the position of writing program director is harmful to an instructor's career, would it not follow, then, that the most humane course of action is to hire directors with tenure, or at least to reserve the position for professors who already are tenured? Notice, also, that the writer recognizes that a non-faculty director works with diminished authority. Although the respondent writes that he sees this as a "slight negative," we question whether he finds it negative at all. It is entirely likely that the power structure of the writer's department is such that the ruling hierarchy finds it desirable that the writing program director function with little authority, reserving real power for itself.[5]

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Many of the prose remarks indicate that the chairs perceive a major responsibility of the writing program administrator to be one of good public relations. This role extends to "producing a good working environment in the writing program," establishing "respect and credibility" for the program, and "retaining the support of non-composition faculty." Several respondents stress the importance of a pleasant working environment. One chair writes, "I believe the freshman director must maintain a positive attitude and keep abreast of faculty concerns, thereby creating a good working environment." Some respondents feel there is a link between a

positive environment and the director's ability to motivate staff: "A good director can establish a good environment by planning with and motivating faculty." Says another, "I think that motivating staff and creating a positive atmosphere are even more important for a director than knowledge of composition scholarship."

Part of this public relations effort is to "make writing respectable." As William J. Gracie, Jr. says, most faculty do "not not yet believe that the composition teacher's calling is as honorable as the literature teacher's" (22). Hartzog quotes one composition director as saying, "Composition's status is not an issue on our campus--because it has no status" ("Composition" 63). Certainly, such an atmosphere is of concern to any chair charged with overseeing a department that has as one of its major responsibilities the operation of a campus-wide writing program. According to the chairs who responded to our survey, "It's imperative that the director establish credibility with faculty and TAs" because "a main task of the FED is to gain respect for the program from all faculty and administrators." Undoubtedly, this concern with credibility is partially related to the political makeup of most English departments, the typical situation being one in which senior literature professors most often possess political control of the department and its policies, while the new, younger composition faculty enjoy the general support of the university and the local community because of their role in addressing the literacy problem. As a result, the changing objectives of the English department and the incipient shifting of the locus of power have caused many "old guard" literature professors to feel threatened and therefore reluctant to share effective power any sooner than they will have to.[6] Thus, an effective writing program administrator must find ways to win the support of all

faculty. The director "must get along well with colleagues" and have the "ability to work effectively with both full-time and part-time instructors as well as with the literature faculty."

All of these public relations objectives demand significant political and administrative sophistication on the part of the director, and it is self-evident that these objectives and abilities are essential to effective program administration. We cannot help but notice once again, however, that the chairs focus primarily on administrative responsibilities that do not entail substantive power. The freshman English director is a communicator (especially, of course, with the chair), a committee chair, a staff trainer, and a public relations specialist—not a policymaker, a program developer, or an administrator concerned with solving political problems. Surely, managing public relations and creating program policy represent two distinctly different levels of administrative responsibility, and at least half the respondents are more comfortable trusting the director with the former than with the latter.

ADDITIONAL QUALITIES

The chairs provide several "important qualities not listed on the questionnaire." Once again, interpersonal skills and personality traits rank high in importance. The writing program director must have "patience and toughness"; "diplomacy, far-sightedness, and consistency"; "common sense and a sense of humor"; and "initiative, an eagerness to serve, and a pleasant personality." The director should exhibit "enthusiasm for writing and a love of teaching people to write," as well as "tenacity in dealing with student complaints and a composed manner in dealing with problems." In addition, the director must be able to "understand personal problems

among staff" and "handle crises with TAs and adjunct staff," as well as "foster morale and professional development in staff." Finally, the director must be "dedicated to undergraduate education" and "must show a genuine interest in education, viewing writing in the context of a liberal education."

Here is a list of some of the miscellaneous qualities, taken verbatim from the questionnaire responses. The director must have the ability to:

- counsel students concerning placement and progress
- understand department standards and how to maintain them
- foster interest in writing across the curriculum among non-English faculty
- maintain uniform grading standards
- acquire external funding
- sort problems according to significance
- manage, plan, and follow through
- delegate or share responsibility
- maintain a smooth and gracious office
- ensure that the program serves the needs and interests of students and faculty
- understand the importance of the freshman English program as it impacts the university
- emphasize by example and pronouncement the central importance of the writing program on campus
- articulate the values and goals of the program to the wider community

CONCLUSION

If this study reveals anything, it is that writing program administrators in many institutions do not yet exercise effective control over their programs. The survey responses indicate that chairs value general administrative abilities and basic professional competence on the part of the director over substantive policy-making or direct administrative control of the program. The implication of these findings, we believe, is that writing program administrators must become aware that they operate within a power hierarchy--a structure in which, consciously or subconsciously, individuals continually vie for personal influence and administrative authority. An English department, like any political environment, is not static--power relationships increase and diminish with time. An effective director must be conscious of this ebb and flow of power and must be prepared, for the good of the program, to guard his or her authority. If freshman English directors are relegated to a purely supervisory role, they will necessarily have less voice in key programmatic decisions, and, consequently, the quality of the program could be affected. "This relation of educational quality to program structure," says Bruffee, "is a central issue for WPAs" (7). Ostensibly, writing program administrators are the department specialists in rhetoric and composition, especially if they remain conversant with current composition scholarship, as the chairs recommend. Is it not reasonable, then, to expect these specialists to be responsible for major decisions concerning the program? Who else is better equipped?

We have no suggestions as to how directors should obtain and maintain substantive authority. We hope, however, that this study helps writing program administrators become more sensitive to the subtle transactions of

power that transpire daily, so that they can take actions to prevent the erosion of their authority and thereby preserve the quality of the writing program. Hartzog writes, "Overall . . . writing program administrators have not yet become good politicians; we have not yet argued well. . . . Only by coming to influence such things as budget allocations, commission reports, and legislation, can we finally improve the state of freshman English and the status of composition" ("Freshman" 14). Perhaps Bruffee says it best: "As a profession . . . it is time we collectively either put up or shut up" (10).

NOTES

[1]It is interesting to note that although several chairs mention the importance of the freshman English director serving as a role model for teaching assistants, only 31 respondents consider it "essential" that the director "receive outstanding evaluations for his or her own teaching."

[2]For example, William J. Gracie, Jr. writes, perhaps somewhat naively, "If WPAs can maintain their familiarity with the best work being done in the profession and at the same time maintain their familiarity with the realities of the local world, they will have a good deal of success, I believe, in guiding their colleagues into exciting and as yet unexplored new territory" (24).

[3]Even when it comes to "establishing a department-wide syllabus," many chairs do not wish to allow the director to wield much power. Only half the respondents find this activity "essential" or "important." Writes one chair with apparent agitation, "The director doesn't make a department-wide syllabus; the department does!" Hartzog's study of writing programs confirms this attitude. Only 36% of the directors she surveyed have been granted the authority to prepare syllabi for others ("Composition" 36).

[4]There is a clear disjunction here between how writing program directors view their roles, at least in the published literature, and how half the respondents view the same role. For example, Polin and White claim, that "WPAs should try to implement change." Other directors feel it is essential that the director have full control of policy in order to effect substantive change.

[5]Hartzog makes a similar point. She recognizes "the director's need for both stability and authority. Tenure and professorship offer both, but not all universities recognize composition in any form as a legitimate field of scholarly endeavor. Directors who take on composition as a second field may be hard pressed to develop proper credentials, both because they are working in two fields and because work in composition is often questioned during reviews for promotion and tenure. It is still much easier for an established academic to move into this field than for young faculty members working in the field to reach top ranks" ("Composition" 137).

[6]As J. Paul Hunter says, "Writing courses have, beyond debate, saved a lot of English departments from decimation in the past few years, and not a few faculty jobs are directly due to the renewed demand for basic courses in writing" (2). Consequently, in order to survive economically, many long-time literature professors find themselves in the unhappy position of having to coexist with a part of the field they disrespect.

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